CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of stabilizing or improving the health-related quality of life of an individual with systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), comprising administering to the individual an effective amount of a dsDNA epitope which specifically binds to an anti-dsDNA antibody from the individual, wherein the administration of the dsDNA epitope results in a stabilization of or improvement in the individual's health-related quality of life.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein administration of the dsDNA epitope results in a sustained reduction of the level of circulating anti-dsDNA antibodies in the individual.

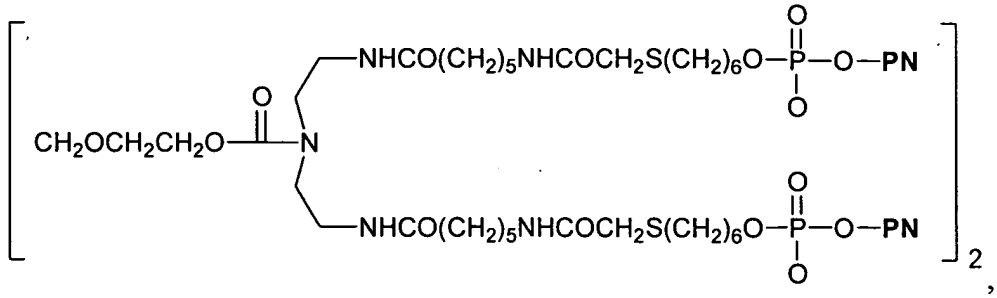
3. The method of claim 2, wherein the sustained reduction is maintained for more than about 16 weeks.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the sustained reduction is maintained for at least about 24 weeks.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the dsDNA epitope comprises a double-stranded polynucleotide 5'-GTGTGTGTGTGTGTGTGTGT-3'(SEQ ID NO:1) in combination with its complementary strand, or one of the single-stranded polynucleotides 5'-GTGTGTGTGTGTGTGTGTGT-3'(SEQ ID NO:1) or 3'-CACACACACACACACACACA-5'(SEQ ID NO:2).

6. The method of claim 1 or claim 5, wherein the dsDNA epitope is administered in the form of a conjugate comprising (a) a non-immunogenic valency platform molecule and (b) two or more double-stranded DNA (dsDNA) epitopes that specifically bind to an anti-dsDNA antibody from the individual.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein the conjugate is a compound of the formula

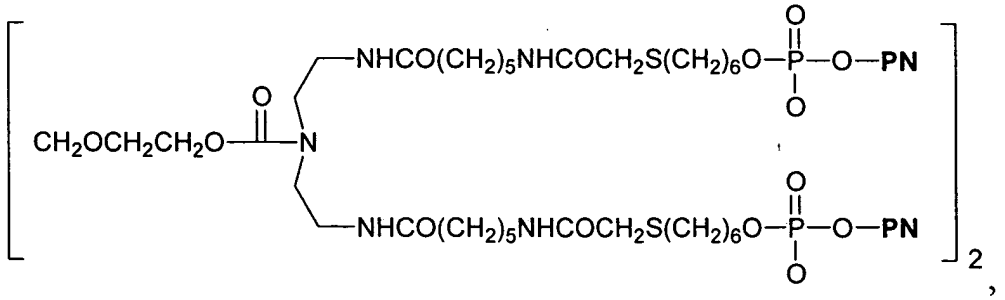


wherein PN is $(CA)_{10}\bullet(TG)_{10}$.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the stabilization or improvement in the individual's health-related quality of life occurs following a renal flare.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the effective amount of the dsDNA epitope is administered to the individual for a period of more than about 16 weeks.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the dsDNA epitope is administered in the form of a compound of the formula



wherein PN is $(CA)_{10}\bullet(TG)_{10}$.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the stabilization or improvement in the individual's health-related quality of life is detectable by the Medical Outcome Survey Short Form 36 (SF-36), wherein the stabilization or improvement is reflected in one or more domain scores selected from the group consisting of physical

functioning, role physical, bodily pain, general health perception, vitality, social functioning, role emotional, and mental health.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the stabilization or improvement in the individual's health-related quality of life is detectable by the Medical Outcome Survey Short Form 36 (SF-36), wherein the stabilization or improvement is reflected in one or more domain scores selected from the group consisting of physical functioning, role physical, bodily pain, general health perception, vitality, social functioning, and mental health.

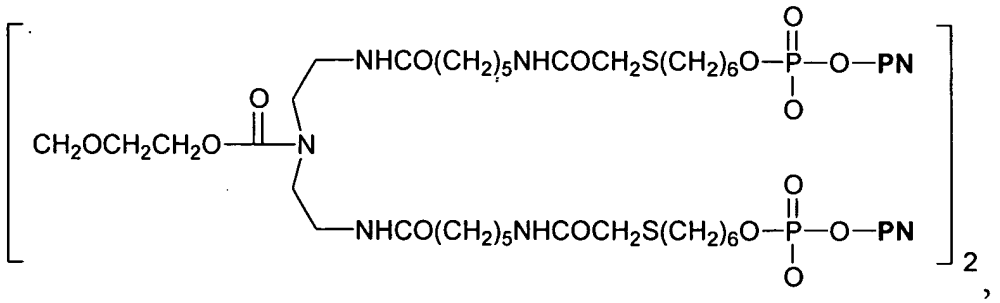
13. The method of claim 1, which is a method of stabilizing the health-related quality of life of an individual with systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), wherein the administration of the dsDNA epitope results in a stabilization of the individual's health-related quality of life.

14. The method of claim 1, which is a method of improving the health-related quality of life of an individual with systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), wherein the administration of the dsDNA epitope results in an improvement in the individual's health-related quality of life.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein the individual is a human.

16. The method of claim 1, wherein the effective amount of the dsDNA epitope is administered to the individual for a period of more than about 16 weeks.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the dsDNA epitope is administered in the form of a compound of the formula



wherein PN is $(CA)_{10}\bullet(TG)_{10}$.

18. A method of stabilizing or improving the health-related quality of life of an individual with systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), comprising reducing the level of circulating anti-dsDNA antibodies in the individual, wherein the reduction of the level of circulating anti-dsDNA antibodies in the individual results in a stabilization or improvement of the health-related quality of life in the indivdual.

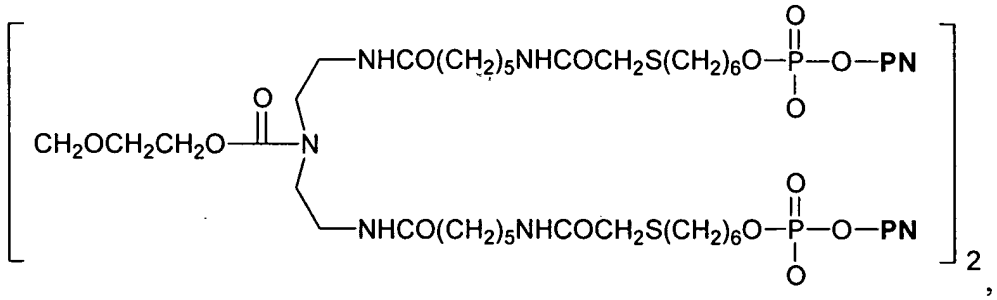
19. The method of claim 18, wherein a sustained reduction of circulating anti-dsDNA antibodies in the individual is achieved.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein the sustained reduction is maintained for more than about 16 weeks.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein the stabilization or improvement in the health-related quality of life of the individual occurs following a renal flare.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein the sustained reduction is effected by administration to the individual of an effective amount of a dsDNA epitope which specifically binds to an anti-dsDNA antibody from the individual.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein the sustained reduction is effected by administration of an effective amount of a compound of the formula



wherein PN is $(CA)_{10}\bullet(TG)_{10}$.

24. The method of claim 20, wherein the sustained reduction is maintained for at least about 24 weeks.

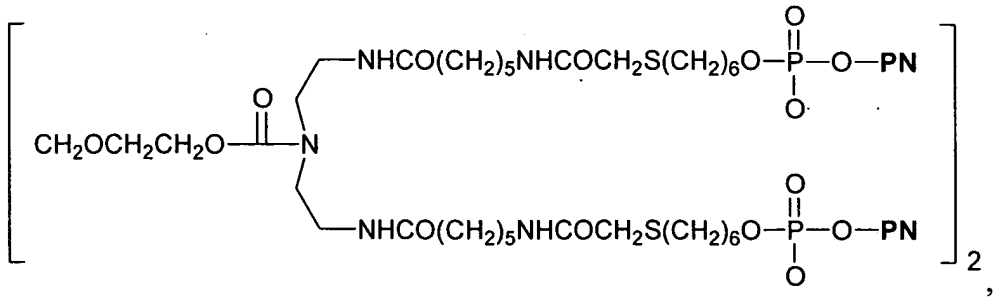
25. The method of claim 18, wherein the step of reducing the level of circulating anti-dsDNA antibodies comprises administering to the individual an effective amount of an agent that reduces the level of circulating anti-dsDNA antibodies in the individual.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein the agent comprises a dsDNA epitope which specifically binds to an anti-dsDNA antibody from the individual.

27. The method of claim 26, wherein the dsDNA epitope comprises a double-stranded polynucleotide 5'-GTGTGTGTGTGTGTGTGTGT-3'(SEQ ID NO:1) and its complementary strand, or one of the single-stranded polynucleotides 5'-GTGTGTGTGTGTGTGTGTGT-3'(SEQ ID NO:1) or 3'-CACACACACACACACACACA-5'(SEQ ID NO:2).

28. The method of claim 26 or claim 27, wherein the agent comprises a conjugate comprising (a) a non-immunogenic valency platform molecule and (b) two or more double-stranded DNA (dsDNA) epitopes that specifically bind to an anti-dsDNA antibody from the individual.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein the conjugate is a compound of the formula



wherein PN is $(CA)_{10}\bullet(TG)_{10}$.

30. The method of claim 18, wherein the stabilization or improvement in the individual's health-related quality of life is detectable by the Medical Outcome Survey Short Form 36 (SF-36), wherein the stabilization or improvement is reflected in one or more domains of health-related quality of life selected from the group consisting of physical functioning, role physical, bodily pain, general health perception, vitality, social functioning, role emotional, and mental health.

31. The method of claim 18, wherein the stabilization or improvement in the individual's health-related quality of life occurs following a renal flare.

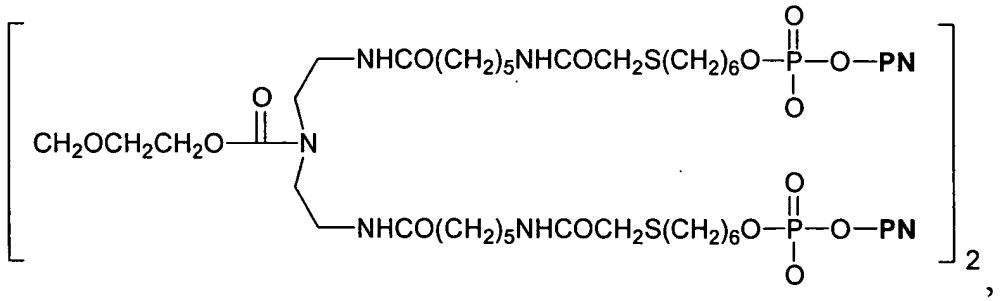
32. The method of claim 31, wherein the step of reducing the level of circulating anti-dsDNA antibodies in the individual comprises administering to the individual an effective amount of an agent that reduces anti-dsDNA antibodies in the individual.

33. The method of claim 32, wherein the agent comprises a dsDNA epitope which specifically binds to an anti-dsDNA antibody from the individual.

34. The method of claim 33, wherein the dsDNA epitope comprises a double-stranded polynucleotide 5'-GTGTGTGTGTGTGTGTGTGT-3'(SEQ ID NO:1) and its complementary strand, or one of the single-stranded polynucleotides 5'-GTGTGTGTGTGTGTGTGTGT-3'(SEQ ID NO:1) or 3'-CACACACACACACACACACA-5'(SEQ ID NO:2).

35. The method of claim 33, wherein the agent comprises a conjugate comprising (a) a non-immunogenic valency platform molecule and (b) two or more double-stranded DNA (dsDNA) epitopes that specifically bind to an anti-dsDNA antibody from the individual.

36. The method of claim 35, wherein the conjugate is a compound of the formula



wherein PN is $(CA)_{10}\bullet(TG)_{10}$.

37. The method of claim 31, wherein a sustained reduction of circulating anti-dsDNA antibodies in the individual is achieved.

38. The method of claim 31, wherein the stabilization or improvement in the individual's health-related quality of life is detectable by the Medical Outcome Survey Short Form 36 (SF-36), wherein the stabilization or improvement is reflected in one or more domain scores selected from the group consisting of physical functioning, role physical, bodily pain, general health perception, vitality, social functioning, role emotional, and mental health.

39. A method of stabilizing or improving the health-related quality of life in an individual with SLE comprising the steps of:

(a) selecting an individual for receiving or continuing to receive treatment based on the individual's need for a stabilized or improved health-related quality of life; and

(b) administering a treatment to the selected individual, wherein administration of the treatment effects a sustained reduction of anti-dsDNA antibodies in the individual.

40. A method of stabilizing or improving the health-related quality of life in an individual having SLE comprising the steps of:

(a) selecting an individual to receive or continue to receive a dsDNA epitope based on the affinity of the dsDNA epitope for an anti-dsDNA antibody in the individual; and

(b) administering the dsDNA epitope to the selected individual, wherein administration of the dsDNA epitope stabilizes or improves the health-related quality of life in an individual.